

Fort Sumter
National Monument

Long Range Interpretive Plan

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Superintendent

Date

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Introduction

Interpretation is about choices. Individuals choose what stories to tell, whom to tell them to and how to tell them. The choices are rarely easy.

The Fort Sumter Visitor Services Division drafted this Long Range Interpretive Plan to guide interpretive services, including exhibits, waysides and presentations for the four sites administered by the National Park Service in the Charleston area. The sites include: Fort Sumter National Monument, the new Fort Sumter Visitor Education Center and ferry terminal at Liberty Square in downtown Charleston, Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island and Charles Pinckney National Historic Site in Mt. Pleasant.

This action plan provides a vision for the future of interpretation and education. The projected life span of this document is five to ten years. It addresses both personal services and media, and is prepared by the park staff and park partners/community with a skilled facilitator in interpretive and education planning. It also provides the foundation elements for the Annual Implementation Plan and should be consistent with other current planning documents

Staff members gathered on St. Helena Island in South Carolina in 1999 to begin talking about interpretation at the sites. The process evolved over the next four years as new exhibits and programs were planned for Fort Moultrie, Fort Sumter and Charles Pinckney. In addition, Liberty Square was designed to be a gateway to the South Carolina lowcountry history and the sites beyond Charleston. Significant moments in American history are showcased at places now under the care of the National Park Service.

The exhibit at Liberty Square was the result of social and military historians wrestling with issues of Interpretation. Beginning in 1990 the staff questioned if a balanced story of why the Civil War started in Charleston was being told. The question remains more than ten years later after many discussions of what should be included and what should be left out. The text and graphics left out could create another exhibit. Liberty Square exhibits attempts to answer three questions outlined in the 1990 interpretive perspective: 1. Why did the war start in Charleston, SC? 2. What will the visitor see while out at Fort Sumter? 3. What were the causes of the Civil War?

Social and military historians were selected to write text, argue context and find graphics to illustrate the diverse history. The exhibits were designed to have visitors draw their own conclusions and to seek answers. Comments commending and condemning the exhibits have been received. Some say we have presented a balanced story, others have told us our perceptions are slanted, and then some feel we missed our opportunity to glorify the battles.

Many opinions were considered including Historian Gaines Foster quoted in the 2000 NPS Report to Congress:

The rapid healing of national divisions and damaged southern self-image... came at the cost of deriving little insight or wisdom from the past. Rather than looking at the war as a tragic failure and trying to understand it or even condemn it, Americans, North and South chose to view it as a glorious time to be celebrated. Most ignored the fact that the nation failed to resolve the debate over the nature of the Union and to eliminate the contradictions between its equalitarian ideals and the institution of slavery without resort to a bloody civil war. Instead, they celebrated the War's triumphant nationalism and martial glory.¹

Change is difficult. Even for the dedicated staff assembled at Fort Sumter, changing Civil War interpretation is difficult. Each of us brings to the table a particular set of experiences, education and cultural background depending on to whom we were born, where we lived and how we were educated. Much has been done over the past ten years to implement an expanded interpretive program. It has involved increasing staff understanding and perception and broadening our community partnerships. The staff has participated in conferences, training programs, dedications, special resource studies, sensitivity sessions, and diverse cultural events to help with the transition.

The Civil War still molds and shapes opinions about people and sections of the country. Its influence reigns over the country as an unseen spirit. The War was not an isolated event that occurred 140 years ago and is now forgotten. The politics of the war and its repercussions remain with us and influence us everyday from the President to the homeless drug addict sleeping on a park bench. It is time for us to understand and place in perspective the American Civil War.

National Park Service interpretation at Fort Sumter began during a period of major civil strife and demonstration. Fifty years hence, the interpretation at Fort Sumter is clearly articulating the causes of the war in an open forum never before seen in the NPS. Times have changed, staff has changed and understanding and appreciation has changed as well. Maybe 50 years from now we will finally grasp the importance of the Civil War in American life.

¹ National Park Service, Interpretation at Civil War Sites, A Report to Congress, March 2000. p. 44.

Part 1. Foundation

Purpose and Significance

Fort Sumter National Monument is composed of three units: Fort Sumter the Visitor Education Center at Liberty Square and Fort Moultrie. A separate Long Range Interpretive Plan has been established for Fort Moultrie.

Situated on a man-made island at the entrance to Charleston Harbor, Fort Sumter was the focal point of political and military events that culminated in the opening bombardment of the Civil War, April 12 - 13, 1861. Upon the evacuation of Major Robert Anderson and his Union garrison, the fort was occupied by Southern troops who defended it against repeated assaults until mid February 1865. At the war's outset, the fort became a symbol of resistance and hope for the Southern cause. Fort Sumter remained an active military installation until 1947.

The Joint Resolution of Congress establishing Fort Sumter National Monument was approved April 28, 1948, as Public Law 504 of the 80th Congress (62 Stat. 204). The legislation states that the monument is to be "a public National Memorial commemorating historical events at or near Fort Sumter."

On November 7, 1986, the President signed Public Law 99-637, which was an act to authorize the acquisition and development of a tour boat dock and associated facilities for Fort Sumter National Monument. For the purposes of interpretation and visitor access, the act authorized the acquisition of almost 9 acres of land and water known as Liberty Square. These lands are administered as part of Fort Sumter National Monument subject to existing laws and regulations. The purpose of the site is to provide a tour boat dock and associated facilities.

Liberty Square, a park-like setting, encourages quiet and meaningful transitions from the Charleston streetscape to the tour boat and museum facilities on the Cooper River waterfront. Opportunities for local residents and tourists to recuperate from the hectic urban experience are enhanced by strolling along the Cooper River promenade, reading the Liberty quotations scattered throughout the park and browsing through the quaint shops in nearby Aquarium Wharf. Liberty Square provides a relaxed setting for informal interpretation and tourist orientation. The tranquil setting also serves as a staging area for hundreds of visitors waiting to enter the SC Aquarium, take the boat trip to Fort Sumter and/or watch an IMAX film. The Square is a popular location for special park uses, including cultural, educational and recreational activities.

Park significance statements summarize the essence of the park's importance to our natural and cultural heritage. They describe the distinctiveness of the

combined resources in the park including the natural, cultural, scientific, recreational, spiritual and other values.

Fort Sumter National Monument is significant because:

- Fort Sumter is where one of the Nation's most critical defining moments, the American Civil War, began.
- Fort Sumter is the most heavily bombarded site in the western hemisphere as a result of the Union forces' attempt to gain control of Charleston Harbor.
- Fort Sumter was a powerful symbol to both North and South, and it remains a memorial to all who fought to hold it.

Themes

Interpretive themes communicate park significance. They embody the park's stories. Theme statements are the key ideas through which the park's resource values are conveyed to the public. These statements connect park resources to the larger processes, systems, ideas and values of which they are a part. The following themes and theme topics are derived from the National Park Service 1996 Thematic Framework and structured in terms of the park's purpose.

This section needs to be filled in. Treat Fort Sumter National Monument as two units of one park: Fort Sumter and Liberty Square.

Theme 1: Peopling Places (example)

- First item
- Second item

Management Goals

Park management has established the following goals:

These bullets were cut from the original document but don't make sense as management goals.

- find the Fort Sumter Boat Dock.
- access Liberty Square facilities without encountering barriers.
- see boat tour schedules readily.
- purchase boat tour tickets efficiently.
- purchase interpretive and educational products.
- wait for tours in a relaxed, accommodating environment.
- orient themselves to regional visitor attractions.
- view exhibits in Liberty Square.

Desired Visitor Experience

Visitor experience statements describe how the interpretive program facilitates physical, intellectual and emotional experiences for visitors. Persons visiting the site should have an opportunity to:

- receive pre-visit information.
- have both a passive and active experience.
- talk with an interpretive ranger or volunteer.
- peruse and/or purchase a wide range of interpretive materials.
- leave with a sense of healing and closure.
- be oriented to the greater Charleston visitor experience.
- be introduced to other National Park Service sites including Fort Moultrie National Monument and Charles Pinckney National Historic Site.
- experience excitement, curiosity, and anticipation.
- build knowledge of the region's themes and stories.
- develop an appreciation for the region's resources.
- make emotional and empathic connections between their personal experiences and those connected to the Civil War.
- answer the site's key questions:
 1. First question?
 2. Second question?
- Identify other sites where visitors could learn more about other aspects of the stories at the site.

1. List local, regional and national sites.

Issues and Influences Affecting Interpretation

Rewrite to reflect FOSU.

Charles Pinckney National Historic Site is a new site entering Phase III of interpretive development outlined in its 1994 Interpretive Prospectus. Such development focuses on themes, additional personal and nonpersonal services, a contact station, more site bulletins, additional research and symposia and lectures. Many issues identified in the site's 1992 management objectives workshop are still valid. They include:

- External
 1. The most significant new issue to emerge is the incorporation of the site's African/Gullah cultural themes into the program. This will be an ongoing process. Congress is currently examining the issue of possibly establishing a local site for interpreting the Gullah culture.
 2. Distinguishing or relating the site to surrounding visitor attractions
- Internal
 1. Entrance and/or interpretive activity fees
 2. Directional signs

Visitor Profiles

Charleston and the lowcountry attract five million visitors annually, making tourism the second largest industry. Tourists contribute \$800 million annually to the local economy. The average tourist spends about \$124 per day in the Charleston area. [Update these figures, Charleston CVB.](#)

The following demographic assessment of the Charleston area was taken from the 1998 Fort Sumter Environmental Assessment and General Management Plan.

The Charleston metropolitan area, consisting of Charleston, Dorchester, and Berkeley counties, is a 2600 square mile area of over 500,000 people. With Dorchester and Berkeley counties leading the state in population growth, the tri-county area is predicted to increase to 622,500 residents by the year 2000. This increase reflects demographic changes involving older populations and a major shift in populations to coastal areas.

Despite the loss of jobs due to military downsizing of the Charleston Navy Base and Shipyard, the Navy still commands a large presence in the area with 12% of the region's total workforce.

The impact of the visitor industry in tri-county area is \$1.5 billion annually with an estimated 5 million visitors each year to the region. The industry creates some 34,000 jobs in the local economy. *Conde Nast Traveler* ranked Charleston among the top twenty destinations in the world in 1995. Primary reasons for visiting the Charleston area are its history and variety of historic sites. Residents from South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, New York, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Michigan, and New Jersey represent the top ten origin states.

The tri-counties serve more than 92,000 students within 128 public schools, and 25 private and parochial schools. Five colleges and universities serve the area.

Consideration should also be given to those persons who make use of resources and programs without actually visiting the site. This is particularly true of persons using electronic (Internet) access.

Existing Interpretive Conditions

Rewrite to reflect FOSU.

Visitors are greeted by an employee or volunteer as they enter the park visitor center, located in an early 18th century farmhouse. The visitor has three main interpretive activities: perusing the museum exhibits, watching one of two 20-minute videos, and walking a ½ mile trail.

Museum exhibits are located in three of the four main rooms of the house. The fourth room contains a cooperating association bookstore and information desk. The exhibits were manufactured in 1995 as temporary interpretive devices focusing on four main areas: Charles Pinckney's contributions to the US Constitution, archeology at the site, the United States as a young, emerging nation, and South Carolina Lowcountry plantation life. These exhibits are inadequate in that new information has revealed inaccuracies and most of them are in need of repair. Currently the park is developing a new exhibit plan.

The two videos offered are *A Founding Father* and *Blessings of Liberty*, both 20 minutes long. The former is a site-specific program produced by South Carolina Educational TV, and the latter a documentary about the framing of the Constitution. Recent archeological information has rendered *A Founding Father* obsolete.

The interpretive trail consists of gravel, grass and mulched pathways forming a rough loop from the house through the historic driveway, the archeological site of a slave community, a nature trail, a boardwalk and a small-scale reproduction rice trunk. There are no wayside exhibits. The visitor uses a handout consisting of a map of the park highlighting the trail and various stops on one side, and a key to the stops on the other. Visitors match the numbered posts found along the trail to the key.

On weekends, ranger programs are offered twice per day, when staffing allows. These programs vary from guided tours to orientation talks. Frequently only one employee is available to operate the visitor center, and so formal programs are not available. Employees provide roving interpretation when staffing allows.

Currently the only publication available is the NPS Unigrid folder, which includes a safety message insert. Several site bulletins are either planned or in production, including the topics of archeology at the site and African-Americans at Snee Farm.

Special interpretive programs are planned regularly twice per year. During the months of February and March the park hosts a series of programs highlighting Colonial heritage. They include dramatic interpretation, colonial craft demonstrations, and African-American and Gullah arts and crafts. These

programs are conducted each weekend during the period. Each September the park hosts a naturalization ceremony where 150-200 new citizens are sworn. This program is generally held on September 17th, Constitution Day. Both the heritage programs and the naturalization program have proven to be popular with the public and have drawn considerable media attention.

Part 2. Future Interpretive Programs

Personal Services

Personal services at Liberty Square will be informal, in keeping with the sites primary function as a staging area for other services. The square provides an ideal setting for roving interpretation by paid staff and volunteers. In addition to their role as greeters near the west gate at Calhoun and Concord streets, they can provide essential information to visitors first-hand, and relieve some pressure on the staffs inside the facilities. Staff roving near the shade shelters, aquarium, and dock will have a greater opportunity for informal interpretation of Liberty Square and the facility themes.

National Park Rangers staffing the Fort Sumter Visitor Center should be a source for some of this informal interpretation. The center will be a demanding assignment during the tourist season, and an opportunity to rove on the plaza or under the center would be a welcome break. Park volunteers and aquarium staff could also perform roving duties on the square.

Non-personal Services

An exhibit plan for the interior of the Fort Sumter Visitor Education Center has already been developed. It consists primarily of large, impressive items from the museum collection and supplemental graphic panels focusing on the major themes.

The area under the visitor center will incorporate several panels supporting Liberty Square themes linked to the Fort Moultrie, Charles Pinckney, Fort Sumter, and other Charleston stories. A world history timeline could link all of the panels and provide context for the expanded stories.

Five individual seating areas near the two shade shelters on the south side of the promenade provide excellent settings for the contemplation of Charleston themes and/or personalities associated with liberty. These exhibits should be in the form of low-profile monumentation. Such an approach will allow visitors to have a sense of discovery as the move from one area to another.

In addition to information monitors showing tour boat schedules and availability, the plaza area beneath the visitor center could support a 5-7 minute video introducing the Fort Sumter story. The video alcove - for a standing audience - could be designed as part of a series of panel exhibits expanding the park story within the context of the Liberty Square theme.

One three-panel kiosk will be located at the end of the pier over the Cooper River. Panels themes will be: shipping, the Cooper River vista, and Fort Sumter today.

A reclamation wayside will be located adjacent to the South Carolina Aquarium.

One low-profile exhibit will be located at the Septima Clark Fountain.

A site bulletin on Liberty Square themes should be developed and available at the west entrance gate, the Fort Sumter Welcome Center, and the South Carolina Aquarium.

Partnerships

There will be a variety of partnership opportunities involving the City of Charleston, the South Carolina Aquarium, and the National Park Service at Liberty Square.

Any partnerships should be formal in nature and carried out through appropriate agreements.

Library and Collection needs

Rewrite to reflect FOSU.

Currently, the site has appropriate landscape planning either completed or underway. In addition, archeological research has been ongoing for several years. The site has a modest but significant museum collection as a result of this research. Topics for further research are:

- Archeological Research: Continued research and analysis of excavated objects is vital to the understanding of the role of Snee Farm in Charles Pinckney's life and the integrity of site's stories.
- Material Cultures Research: Little material culture remains that directly relates to Charles Pinckney. Archeological research will continue to be a major source for material culture. An assertive effort needs to be made to locate any other surviving material culture.
- Special Studies: Charles Pinckney was a complex and extraordinary individual. To better understand his role in the leadership of the young nation and the drafting of the Constitution, the following topics need further study:
 - Charles Pinckney's landholdings.
 - A comprehensive history of Christ Church and its relationship with Snee Farm, Mount Pleasant and Charleston during Pinckney's era.
 - Slave life in the 18th century in Charleston and Christ Church Parish.

Research Needs

Staffing Needs

Liberty Square provides opportunities for "extending" the proposed staffing for the Fort Sumter Visitor Education Center. As such, there is no need to develop a separate staffing plan. The visitor center staffing plan should provide frequent opportunities for staff and volunteers to move outside the building to interact with visitors and provide information and basic interpretation. During the tourist season, it would be appropriate to assign duty stations near the visitor center in order to relieve any crowding that may occur inside the building.

Interpretive Program Costs

Implementation Plan

- 2001 Develop media planning and design
- 2002 Produce media
- 2003 Install media

Responsibilities: to be assigned

Planning Team

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